



Sermon Series: Risk-Takers: The Adventure of Walking by Faith

To be used with Session Three: Rahab: A Faith Not Held Back by Fear

Sermon Title Possibilities: Standing on the Promises of God

Scripture: Joshua 2:1-4a,8-14; 6:22-25

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Rahab: A Faith Not Held Back by Fear” this sermon emphasizes that faith acts when others are paralyzed by fear. In our last lesson from Joshua 1, three times God commands Joshua to be strong and of good courage (vss. 6-7, 9). Franklin D. Roosevelt, the thirty-second President of the United States, often referred to as “FDR,” is credited with saying, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.” However, the assessment that something is more important than fear does not necessarily give us the will to overcome it. It’s faith in a God who is powerful enough to keep His promises that enables us to overcome fear.

Introduction: Fear itself is not a sin. Fear can be a good thing. Fear is a natural human emotion given to us as a survival mechanism that alerts us to danger and prompts us to act to protect ourselves - that’s healthy fear. There is another healthy fear. The Bible says multiple times that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10; Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10). However, fear becomes unhealthy when it paralyzes us. Fear becomes sin when it immobilizes us not to act on our faith and trust God. In the face of scourging, hatred, persecution, and being called everything but a child of God (Matt. 10:16-25), Jesus said to His followers, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:28-31). What causes faith to overcome fear is not only a healthy fear of the Lord but knowing that if He cares enough to keep His eye on the sparrow, I know He’s keeping watch over me.

1. Joshua 2:1-4a. Take a stand.

Rahab told the king’s men who were sent to her house to capture the spies, that they had already left, but she had hidden them on her roof. Rahab, much like Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives who refused to carry out Pharaoh’s orders to murder Hebrew infants because they feared God more than Pharaoh, were asked why they had not carried

out Pharaoh's orders. Their fabricated story was, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them (Ex. 1:19). The Bible says, "Therefore God dealt well with the midwives...because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them" (Ex. 1:20-21). "Dealt well," is the idea of God's mercy. Nowhere does the Bible say that God justified Rahab or the midwives' untruths. The Bible never specifically mentions Rahab's lie. It talks about her faith. God focused on her stand, not her sin, because "...love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). Rahab, Shiphrah, and Puah, much like the "conductors" on the underground railroad or the "rescuers" in Nazi Germany, employed deception to stand for what was right in the face of an unjust society and unethical decrees. God, unlike many sterile religionists, understands that we live in a fallen, oppressive world, and sometimes we are put in a position where we must choose between the lesser of two evils. Have faith in God, stand for what is right, and trust God with the rest.

2. Joshua 2:8-14. Choose the Lord's side.

The spies arriving at Rahab's house was no coincidence, this was God's providence. Through Rahab's words God assured them of His promise to give Israel the land (v. 9). Rahab also stated that terror and panic had fallen on Jericho; that everybody had lost heart, and their courage had failed. Rahab used the word "Yahweh" for "Lord." Yahweh was God's personal name. Rahab didn't "get saved" because of the spies' witness. She was already a believer before the spies showed up. It was no coincidence that the spies chose the house of a prostitute who was already saved.

But how did she get a personal relationship with God? Rahab said, "For we have heard how the Lord..." (v. 10). The Bible states that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Rahab teaches us that you can't judge a person by their profession! Rahab was saved, but stuck, because salvation does not always mean immediate deliverance from our situations. Perhaps these spies were the answer to Rahab's prayers for deliverance. Rahab's recitation of what God did for Israel intimates she may have been saved but stuck for a while. In *Hold On*, James Fortune wrote, "I know you're praying for a change...nothing good has come your way for so long. You need someone to understand this place your heart is in...but know your breakthrough's not far away, so hold on." Rahab chose to side with Israel because she chose to side Israel with God.

Joshua 6:22-25. Depend on the promise.

Rahab and her family's story show us that the God of the Old Testament was not some genocidal, homicidal, ethnic cleansing God. Rahab was a Canaanite and so was her family. True Judaism has always understood that the "scarlet-colored cord" that runs throughout the entirety of Scripture is the promise that anyone who confesses Yahweh as

the one true God is no longer under His judgment and becomes a full member of God's people (Lev. 19:33-34; Ruth 1:16-17; 2:11-12; Isa. 56:6-7). It was true of the mixed multitude that left Egypt (Ex. 12:38), true of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law (Ex. 18:10-12), true of Naaman, the Syrian Commander (2 Kings 5:15-19), and true of Rahab and her family.

God commanded the blood of a lamb be painted on the door posts and lintels of houses in Egypt, so when the angel of death "passed over" and saw the blood, death would not occur (Ex. 12:7, 12-13), lives would be spared, and deliverance from Egypt would mean a new life. God chose to save Rahab and her family through a scarlet-colored cord hung outside the window of her house (Joshua 2:18-21), so that her family did not experience death, their lives were spared, and the result was deliverance into a new life. God has chosen to save those who put their faith in the blood, spare them from death, deliver them from sin and provide them eternal life. "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Conclusion: There have been many commentators who have tried to clean up Rahab's story. They have turned Rahab's house into an inn and Rahab into an innkeeper or madam. One commentator went as far as to say there is no way that God would allow a prostitute to be included in the ancestry of Jesus Christ. But Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 clearly state that Rahab was a prostitute. But why would Jesus, who came to live on the inside of sinners (Phil. 2:13), have a problem with sinners being in His lineage? There were sinners in his line (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.) before He came (His ancestors) and we're sinners in His line after He came (His descendants), because we are all sinners saved by grace! No matter our past, never let your story cause you to believe that God can't use you for His glory!

Author Bio

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